

STATE OF ALASKA
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Division of Employment and Training Services

Commissioner Heidi Drygas

State Training and Employment Program

Notice of Request for Grant Applications

State Fiscal Year 2017

Date of Issue: March 4, 2016

Application Deadline:

Grant Applications must be submitted through EGrAMS

By 5:00 p.m., April 8, 2016



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Project Timeline – July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

Eligible Applicants - Entities eligible to apply for STEP funding include private sector employers, sponsors of federally registered apprenticeship programs, non-profit organizations, regional training centers, adult education and training providers, and local and state government agencies who meet the qualifying due diligence criteria and assurances required by the grant.

EGrAMS: Grant applications must be submitted through the **E**lectronic **G**rants **A**dministration and **M**anagement **S**ystem (EGrAMS). The online grant submission system can be accessed at the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development website or directly at egram.s.dol.alaska.gov. A sample application form, sample grant agreement, definitions, references, and frequently asked questions are available for view in EGrAMS. In order to have access to the application within EGrAMS, an individual from the organization must submit a project director request. Questions about EGrAMS should be directed to the EGrAMS Help Desk at (907) 465-4893 or dol.dbp.egram.s.helpdesk@alaska.gov

STEP Program Contact – Questions about the content of the Request for Grant Applications (RGA) should be directed to Julie Frizzell, Program Coordinator: (907) 269-4590 or Julie.frizzell@alaska.gov

RGA Informational Teleconference: A teleconference will be held to answer questions about this FY 2017 STEP Request for Grant applications (RGA) and application process.

Date: March 17, 2016

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Conference Telephone: 1-888-354-0094

Conference ID: 9774718

Americans with Disabilities Act - Auxiliary aides and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. To make arrangements for auxiliary aides or services, please contact the Division of Employment and Training Services at (907) 269-4590 no later than ten working days prior to the application deadline.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. All grant recipients or sub-contractors must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

SECTION I – STEP PROGRAM INFORMATION

Thank you for your interest in applying for a State Training and Employment Program (STEP) grant with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services. This Request for Grant Applications (RGA) is in accordance with state statute [AS 23.15.620](#) and State administrative code [8 AAC 87](#). The STEP is funded by a percentage (0.01) of employee payroll tax contributions for Unemployment Insurance directed to the STEP account. Program funding is appropriated by the Alaska State Legislature for employment and training services based upon available resources from that account.

The purpose of the STEP is to enhance the quality and accessibility of in-state training and employment services for Alaska residents to help meet the workforce needs of employers in the state. STEP seeks to increase resident employment in industries where a high number of nonresidents are working, reduce future unemployment claims, and foster economic growth in all regions by meeting employers demand for a skilled workforce. Competitive grants are awarded on an annual basis. The total amount of STEP funds available for competitive grants in Fiscal Year 2017 is \$5.5 million.

The Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) provides oversight for Alaska’s workforce investment system and guides state driven employment and job training programs. The AWIB works closely with industry employers and workforce advocates to develop strategic workforce plans for industry sectors. The workforce plans are aimed at increasing resident hire and closing labor gaps, particularly in occupations where labor market projections and employer input have identified critical labor shortages. Industry sector workforce plans have been developed for occupations in the listed industries:

- Construction
- Education
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Maritime & Seafood Processing
- Alternative & Renewable Energy
- Information Technology
- Health Care
- Natural resource development (oil, gas, and mining)
- Transportation

The department is seeking proposals for STEP employment and training projects that serve employers, job seekers and employed workers in these and other industries such as agriculture and manufacturing. Of particular interest are projects that focus on strategic workforce objectives identified by the department and the AWIB:

- (1) Health Care: Alaska’s top twenty-five job growth opportunities are in the health care industry. Health care is projected to add over 11,000 new jobs by 2022. Proposals should focus on employment and training for entry and mid-level occupations where training is available in Alaska, and particularly proposals that provide apprenticeship programs.

- (2) Resident Hire: Training for occupations where there are high percentages of non-residents employed as identified in the [2014 Alaska Nonresident Hire report](#). For purposes of this RGA an occupation where 20 percent or more industry workers are nonresident according to the report.
- (3) Reducing Recidivism: Employment and training for individuals 18 years or older who are transitioning from juvenile justice or adult correctional facilities and returning to society, as well as those who have completed their term and need services to be employed.

The AWIB seeks a regional distribution of funded projects to ensure every region receives STEP resources to help meet local workforce needs. The department has established six economic regions:

- Anchorage/Mat-Su
- Gulf Coast
- Interior
- Northern
- Southeast
- Southwest



Types of Employment and Training Services Allowed

Industry Specific Training – Training resulting in participants acquiring industry-recognized skills, competencies, or credentials as required for a specific industry occupation. Industry specific training instruction teaches individuals technical knowledge and hands-on skills to perform the tasks of a specific occupation. Training should result in an industry recognized credential, certificate or licenses that attest that the individual has those skills.

Work Based Learning – Training provided by an employer at the work place where there are paid work experience opportunities and a structured learning process is in place. Work based learning such as on-the-job training (OJT), and internships builds trainees skills and prepares them for success in that job. Work based learning entails a written agreement between the employer and the trainee that outlines the structured learning process, lists the skill competencies to be learned, states the rate of hourly pay and includes the involvement of worksite mentors who teach the required skills and evaluate the worker's progress. OJT is intended to compensate the employer for the *extra* cost associated with hiring and training an individual who does not yet meet the requirements of the position. An OJT agreement may reimburse employers an amount negotiated with the Division of Employment and Training Services. Additional information regarding OJT activities is located on the Divisions [OJT webpage](#).

Company Specific Customized Job-Linked Training – Training designed to meet the specific workforce development needs of a business that will result in participants acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to be hired, or training for existing employees to upgrade skills to meet new conditions of the job such as introducing new technology, equipment, products or processes. Employers must clearly state why this specific training is needed. Applicants that apply for company specific training must state in writing their intentions to hire, retain, or advance persons that successfully complete the training.

Quality Pre-Apprenticeship – Pre-apprenticeship is defined as a program or a set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program where there is a formal agreement with at least one or more federally RA program(s). A pre-apprenticeship program provides paid work experience and hands-on training to increase math, literacy and occupational skills needed to gain entry into a RA program. The pre-apprentice agreement should offer either direct recruitment or direct entry into the RA program. The department has adopted the USDOL Model for Pre-Apprenticeship as a guide for Alaska programs. More information about pre-apprentice training can be found in [Training and Employment Notice 13-12](#).

Registered Apprenticeship - All apprenticeship programs must be registered with the US Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship. Grant applicants must submit proof of current Federal Registration. Alaska has over 2,000 apprentices learning while they work in jobs leading to highly paid careers essential to Alaska's economy. Expanding registered apprenticeship is a goal of Governor Walker's administration and a priority of the AWIB. The governor signed [Administrative Order #278](#) in November, 2015 that establishes a goal of apprentices performing 15 percent of the work on public funded construction projects. In October 2015 the AWIB passed [Resolution #15-05](#) supporting the use and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship as an employment and training career pathway.

Support Services for STEP Participants - STEP can provide support services to enable participants to attend STEP training. Applicants should include all participant support costs needed within their proposal. For example, participant transportation to and from training, ground transportation during training, temporary housing, meals, and required license and certificate fees, if needed. Individuals that need additional services not provided by a STEP grant should be referred to an Alaska Job Center for assistance. Participants enrolled by a grantee under this RGA who are also served by a Job Center will be co-enrolled in the STEP information system.

Types of Employment and Training Services Not Allowed

Degree Centered Long-Term Training - STEP grants are not intended to provide tuition for an associate or college degree program. There are many other resources available to individuals that want to pursue a higher education degree. Applicants should not propose training that will not be completed during the project timeline. However, earning college credit as a result of taking STEP training is encouraged. If grant applicants will provide college credit they should explain in the proposal what college credits will be earned by the individual when training is complete. Any training provided by an accredited postsecondary school or college must be completed within the timeframe of the proposal and result in participants obtaining an occupational certificate, credential or license, recognized by industry.

Participant Eligibility Requirements

Participants *are not* automatically eligible for training and support services. STEP's eligibility requirements are specific. STEP funds should only be used for residents of the State who meet all eligibility requirements.

STEP assists individuals who have worked in a position covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) in Alaska or another state within the past five years. The individual must be an Alaska resident meaning a person who maintains a principal place of abode in the state for at least 30 days, is physically present in the state, and plans to remain indefinitely. Proof of Alaska residency may be documented through an Alaska Driver's License or State ID. Eligibility for UI can be determined through copies of payroll stubs, W-2's, letters from employers attesting that they contribute to the UI fund on behalf of the individual, or by an individual self-attesting they have contributed to UI within the past five years. If unemployed, the individual must be receiving UI benefits or have exhausted the right to UI benefits within the past three years.

Applicants must clearly describe their outreach, recruitment and selection process in the grant application. STEP is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program and all grantees must adhere to EEO and Civil Rights rules and regulations outlined in the assurances that will accompany any grant award.

Performance Outcomes

STEP provides grants to serve large cohorts of individuals which results in more residents receiving cost-effective services. All services allowed under this program must help participants obtain employment or if already employed, maintain employment. All training must result in the individual attaining industry recognized credentials, licenses, or certifications or advancement in apprentice training. Services are expected to result in an increase in annual earnings for all individual's trained within one year after training.

Project performance will be measured and the results reported to the Alaska Workforce Investment Board, Governor and the Alaska State Legislature. The performance measures are:

- The total number of participants served;
- The occupational certificates, credentials or licenses earned;
- The annual income prior to receiving STEP services;
- Pre-Employment Status; Unemployed, Underemployed (not full time), Employed;
- Post-Employment Status; Unemployed, Underemployed, Employed;
- Annual earnings 7-12 months after receiving STEP services, and;
- Completion of the project on-time, on-budget.

After the Fiscal Year the department's Research and Analysis Section will analyze the performance of each Grantee to determine pre- and post-training employment status and annual earnings.

Funding Limits

Costs must be reasonable and comparable to industry standards for the type of training proposed. The average cost per participant trained with STEP grant funds in fiscal year 2015 was \$2,025. Additionally:

- Funding requests may not exceed \$400,000 per application. Any request for STEP funds above \$400,000 will be rejected;
- Only one application is allowed per organization. If a grant applicant submits two applications both applications will be rejected;
- The cost per participant may not exceed \$5,000 including training related support services. Grant applicants may provide additional funding of their own if costs exceed \$5,000 but STEP will not provide funding above the \$5,000 per participant limit;
- Personnel and sub-contractor roles must be clearly defined and the amount and use of funds for those services must be justifiable and necessary to perform activities to meet the goals of the grant.
- STEP funds must only be used for directly serving participants. STEP funding is not intended to replace or supplant existing resources for training;
- STEP may not be used to construct, modify, or otherwise alter existing equipment and facilities, or to finance acquisition of new equipment and facilities; and
- No instructional equipment costing \$5,000 or more will be funded through STEP grants.

Grant Proposal Review and Evaluation

The AWIB will form a panel that will review proposals and score them following the evaluation criteria established for STEP. Scoring is based upon a 100 point system with up to an additional 5 points for focus on state workforce priorities, and up to an additional 5 points for grantee direct, in-kind or leveraged resources.

- The project addresses industry workforce needs including: the number of residents to be trained; the region served; the priority industry and in-demand occupations; and employment plan.
 - Up to 40 points
- The project activities are clearly defined and estimated results are identified for outreach, training, occupational certificates, and timeline.
 - Up to 30 points
- The grant applicant's organizational capacity to perform the tasks and achieve results. Previous STEP grantees will be rated, in part, on meeting past project performance outcomes. New grant applicants will be rated on the capacity to perform as outlined in their proposal.
 - Up to 20 points
- The budget, budget narrative and cost per participant clearly explain the financial needs and the estimated costs are reasonable for the project activities.
 - Up to 10 points
- Extra Points:
 - Up to 5 points for project activities that address any of the following state workforce priorities: registered apprenticeship, health care occupations, reducing recidivism, offsetting non-resident hire, and regional distribution of funded projects.
 - Up to 5 points for leveraging resources such as funding, in-kind support or other leverage resources to the project.

Budget Narrative Guidance

The following category-level information must be entered in the budget narrative:

Personal Services: Summarize the positions that will be covered under personal services, including the roles of the positions, the proportion of the individuals' total time that will be dedicated to this grant, and the funds allocated for the positions.

Travel: Summarize the program-specific need for travel, including when travel is anticipated to occur. Participant travel is entered under Participant Support.

Contractual: Summarize the contractual expenses (expenses for services received from entities other than the applicant), including how the costs of contractual fees were determined.

Supplies: Summarize the supplies (typically items less than \$5000) that will be purchased in support of program objectives.

Equipment: Summarize the equipment (typically items more than \$5000) that will be purchased in support of program objectives.

Participant Support Services: Summarize the expenses for training and employment assistance services.

Administration: Summarize how the program or participants benefit from the funded administrative services. All administrative costs must be included in this line item and the administrative costs must not exceed twelve percent (12%) of the total grant award.

Each category line item estimated amount will be described in the **Budget Narrative** section of the application budget and will be used by the review committee to better understand expenses. This does not preclude the need to enter detailed line-item information in the **Notes** section of the budget form. If the Grant applicant needs more detailed instructions contact the Program Coordinator.

SECTION II: GENERAL APPLICATION INFORMATION

Definitions and References: Applicants are strongly encouraged to read through the *Definitions and References* document, available from the same location at which this RGA was located. This document contains information that can assist in the submission of quality proposals.

Application: Applications will only be accepted through EGrAMS, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Division of Employment and Training Services' Electronic Grants Administration and Management System. Application information shall not be treated as public information any time prior to the notices of award or denial, but is subject to public disclosure after the notices are issued. Upon receipt, all applications and their contents become property of the Department. In order to have access to the application within EGrAMS, an individual from the organization must submit a project director request.

Application Deadline: Only applications received by the deadline will be considered; EGrAMS will not allow submittal of applications past the submission deadline.

Cost Reimbursement Grants: Grants awarded are cost reimbursement grants. Costs incurred by the applicant, including, but not limited to, the cost for the preparation and submission of an application, prior to the full execution of the grant agreement, are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Budget Costs: The applicant must provide a detailed budget that reflects the anticipated costs of the project. The budget must be reasonable and practicable, account for the expenditure of all funds prior to the end of the fiscal year, and will be assessed and evaluated by a review committee. Unless specifically

approved by the Department, incentives, promotional items and memorabilia, gifts, and souvenirs are not allowed.

Grantee Contribution: A grantee contribution includes all resources, including cash, in-kind, and leveraged, used by the applicant to support grant activity and outcomes. Although applicants are encouraged to provide a contribution, contributions are not a requirement for an award. Grantee contributions specified in the budget require expenditure documentation.

SECTION III: AWARD/DENIAL PROCESS

Application Review: The Division of Employment and Training Services will perform an initial review of all properly submitted applications and forward all complete, responsive, and eligible applications to a review committee composed of AWIB members. The AWIB will make funding recommendations to the department Commissioner. Applications deemed non-responsive will not be reviewed by the committee.

Evaluation: A review committee comprised of members of the AWIB will evaluate applications and provide the Commissioner with a list of grants recommended and not recommended for funding. If necessary, the division may request clarification of information from applicants to assist the AWIB in making final funding recommendations. The Commissioner, after consultation with the AWIB, is solely responsible for making all grant award or denial decisions under this solicitation.

Results of Application Review and Evaluation: Each applicant approved by the Commissioner will be provided a written Notice of Intent to Award. Upon issuance of a Notice of Intent to Award, the application will move to the grant negotiation stage with the division. The Commissioner reserves the right to revoke a Notice of Intent to Award if the information provided in the application is found to be subsequently in error or the decision was made on the basis of inaccurate information. Applicants not recommended for funding will receive a written Notice of Award Denial. Applicants receiving a Notice of Award Denial have ten working days to request reconsideration by the Commissioner.

Grant Negotiations: The division reserves the right to negotiate with all applicants pending award of a grant as needed to achieve the best outcomes for STEP participants. The division may negotiate the grant award amount, performance and outcomes, and other conditions to ensure an adequate distribution of funds to provide employment and training services in all regions. All grant awards are contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds by the Alaska State Legislature. While this has not happened in the history of STEP, if the FY 2017 STEP fund appropriation is reduced or limited in any way after the effective date of the grant agreement, awards are subject to possible re-negotiation or termination.

Grant Award: Grant agreements must be signed within 45 days of receipt from the division or the award may be rescinded in order to redirect the funds to a responsive grant applicant.

Due Diligence: All grant recipients and any sub-contractors or sub-recipients receiving over \$25,000, which are not state agencies, are required to go through a multi-step due diligence process to demonstrate

their suitability to receive grant funds. Additional information can be found in division policy [07-527 Due Diligence](#).

Reconsideration and Appeals: A person that receives a Notice of Denial of Award may file a written request for reconsideration addressed to the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development no later than ten working days after receiving the Notice of Denial of Award. The denial notice will include information explaining the reasons the proposal was denied. The grant applicant must provide a written request for reconsideration that addresses the reasons the proposal was not recommended for award, as explained in the denial notice. Appeals should be sent to: Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Commissioners Office, PO Box 111149, Juneau, AK 99811.

The Commissioner will issue a written decision by the tenth working day after a request for reconsideration is reviewed. The Commissioner's decision on an appeal will serve as the final determination. If the Commissioner reverses the decision to award a grant based upon the appeal for reconsideration, the division will contact the grant applicant and negotiate the terms of the award. Additional information on grant awards and appeals can be found in division policy [07-507 Grant Award and Appeal](#).

SECTION IV: GRANT TERMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ACPE Registration: Grant recipients not in the University of Alaska system must have a status with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE). This is an ACPE requirement by state statute [AS 14.48](#) and applies to grant recipients:

- *if* they are providing classes, courses, or programs of training, instruction, or study;
- *and* their primary focus is on working with persons who have completed or terminated their secondary education, or who are beyond the age of compulsory high school attendance;
- *and* their organization can be defined as “an entity offering postsecondary programs, courses, vocational training, or an educational credential including distance education.”

To check the status of your organization, see [Institutional Authorization](#) on the ACPE website or contact ACPE at EED.ACPE-IA@alaska.gov for more information.

Program Reports: Grant recipients must complete and submit program reports in EGrAMS. Program reports must include narrative updates on the progress of the project and statistical data related to the grant recipient meeting the goals and objectives of the project scope. All grantees must report monthly. Upon completion of the project, the grant recipient may be required to submit a final program report.

Financial Reports: It is critical to the success of the program that grant funds are fully expended by the end of the award period. To ensure that budgets are on target, grant recipients are periodically required to demonstrate how their budget will be fully expended by the end of the period of performance. Grant recipients that are not meeting their planned expenditures may have their grant awards reduced.

The division will provide electronic forms to request reimbursement of expenditures and submit periodic reports and income reports. Reimbursement requests and grant contributions must be supported with clear and concise financial reports and expense documentation.

Success Stories: Success stories and photographs are critical components to the continuation of the program and can be submitted at any time. The grant recipient must submit three (3) success stories by the completion of the grant period. A Media Consent and Release form and format guidelines for photographs and writing will be provided by the division. The Media Consent and Release forms for all individuals mentioned or shown in the success story must be submitted along with the success story.

Participant Data Collection and Reporting: Grant recipients are required to collect personally identifiable information (PII) for participants receiving services. This information must be collected and entered in a timely manner in the Department's Individual Case Management system (ICM) per division policy [07-508 Participant Performance Data Collection](#). Data to be collected includes, but is not limited to name, birthdate, and address; social security numbers for participants age 18 or older or receiving wages associated with activities conducted under this grant; services provided; and demographics. Files, including applications must be kept for each participant either in paper or electronic files. Additional file and record retention policies will be listed in the grant agreement.

Information collected in ICM will only be used by the department to develop impact measurements and aggregate statistics. All information, including PII, will only be shared with other State of Alaska departments and only as necessary to develop aggregate statistics.

Equal Opportunity Responsibilities: Grant recipients must disseminate, and prominently display in a conspicuous location, the *Equal Opportunity Is the Law* notice, providing initial and continuing notice that it does not discriminate on any prohibited basis. Grant recipients will also maintain a signed copy of the *Equal Opportunity is the Law* certification form, provided by the division, from each subcontractor or partner, and from each organization that receives services under this grant. All organizations that provide training or services for which participants must apply or register must maintain a signed copy of the *Equal Opportunity is the Law* certification form for each applicant or registrant.

Monitoring: Grant recipients are subject to monitoring by the AWIB and the division. Monitors will include, and are not limited to, review of grant recipient files and records to ensure adherence to the project scope, objectives, goals, training schedules, financial, and equal opportunity compliance. Monitoring may be conducted on-site. Grantees will receive written notices to inform them of a project monitor and a detailed list of items to be reviewed. Some grantees may be monitored with simple requests for information to confirm compliance with grant conditions. Additional monitoring information may be found in division policy [07-523 Grant Monitoring](#).